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RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RUCPDC/NOAA NMFS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
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SUBJECT: INDIA UNVEILS ITS NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

REF A: New Delhi 1667
REF B: New Delhi 1678

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11. Summary. A week before the G-8 Summit in Japan, India's Prime Minister (PM) and Union Minister of Environment and Forests (MOEF) Dr. Manmohan Singh launched the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) on June 30, 2008 in New Delhi. The plan has been eagerly awaited by environmental activists, scientists and industry not only at home but also abroad as India along with China is one of the countries whose growth is powered mainly by fossil fuels, which are a major cause of the increase in carbon emissions into the atmosphere. The plan has been divided into eight national missions, which are related to solar energy, enhanced energy efficiency, sustainable habitat, conservation of water, sustaining the Himalayan eco-system, creating a green India, sustainable agriculture and creation of strategic knowledge platform for climate change. Solar energy has received special emphasis. As expected, the plan does not talk about emission caps except that India will not exceed the per capita emissions of developed nations. The document also states that India will engage actively in multilateral negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in a positive, constructive and forward-looking manner.

PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

12. While releasing the Plan on June 30, PM Singh said climate change was a global challenge and it could be met through a global, collaborative and cooperative effort and India is prepared to play

its role as a responsible member of the international community and makes its own contribution. "India is already doing so in the multilateral negotiations taking place under the UNFCCC and the outcome we are looking for must be effective, fair and equitable," Dr. Singh said. Every citizen on the planet must have an equal share of the planetary atmospheric space. Long-term convergence of per capita emission was, therefore, the only equitable basis for a global compact on climate change. The plan recognizes that there is a tradeoff between carbon emissions and economic growth that India has to be careful about accepting. There is also an acceptance that India has a responsibility to try and mitigate climate change - but not at the cost of poverty alleviation.

SEVERAL MINISTRIES AND GROUPS CONTRIBUTED TO THE PLAN

¶3. Several senior cabinet colleagues and experts were present during the launch, including Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, Power Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde, MOEF Minister of State Mr. Namo Narain Meena, Scientific Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr. R. Chidambaram, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister for Climate Change, Mr. Shyam Saran and Deputy Chairperson of the Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia.

¶4. The work on the Plan was started in 2007, when the fourth assessment report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), headed by Dr R.K. Pachauri, made it clear in no uncertain terms that drastic and urgent measures must be taken to arrest the climate change caused by global warming due to human activities. A high-level Council on Climate Change headed by the Prime Minister was set up to draw up the country's strategy to meet the challenge of both mitigation and adaptation to the inevitable climate change. The NAPCC is a result of a joint effort of several ministries and experts. PM Singh acknowledged the contributions of

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the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change, and in particular Mr. Kapil Sibal, Minister of Science & Technology, Dr. Chidambaram, and Mr. Shyam Saran, who oversaw the final drafting of the Plan. The MOEF played an important coordination role under the leadership of Mr. Namo Narain Meena (Reftel A). Contributions were also made by the Ministries of Power, New and Renewable Energy, the Planning Commission and The Energy Research Institute (TERI).

PLAN SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE INTERNAL DEBATE

¶5. According to several reports, the release of the Plan was earlier stalled, with the PM's Council on Climate Change debating how much of the country's international stance should be incorporated in the document. Some had suggested that the plan should be looked upon as a purely domestic document while others were keen to ensure that the domestic plan be written in the context of the global negotiations that seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The latter group seems to have got its point across more emphatically in the final version. The U.S. has suggested that India's domestic action plan become the basis for its international commitments (Reftel B).

SEVERAL GROUPS AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS CONCERNED OVER LACK OF TRANSPARENCY

¶6. As reported in the Hindu on July 1, 2008, 27 civil society groups and environmentalists, in an open letter addressed to the Prime Minister, expressed disappointment over the lack of transparency in the preparation of the Plan, a critical policy document. No information was shared on the draft plan and there had been no process of consultation with civil society or independent scientists, researchers and experts.

¶7. "Any major policy defining process has always been open to public debate and consultation. Climate change will define the future of our country's people, environment and economy. Any policy document that intends to govern the manner in which India addresses this issue should be given adequate space and time for public

debate. Such transparency and consultation will also be in keeping with the avowed principles of your government," it said. The letter demanded that the draft plan be opened up for public debate, this matter be discussed widely with all stakeholders and a process for regional public consultations be set in place. This will ensure that the resulting document reflects the broader views of the Indian people, and not a few highly placed officials or experts.

¶8. The PM in his remarks did, however, mention that the Plan is expected to be the subject of national debate and will evolve and improve through a much wider interaction.

PLAN DELINEATES EIGHT NATIONAL MISSIONS

¶9. With projected changes in climate and predictions associated with climate change in terms of loss to agriculture, forest, spurt in diseases and degradation of ecosystem, the Plan has identified eight national missions in sectors like solar energy, enhanced energy efficiency, sustainable habitat, conservation of water, sustaining the Himalayan eco-system, creating a green India, sustainable agriculture and creation of a strategic knowledge platform for climate change. The plan has also emphasized public awareness and if needed, legislation at the Central and state levels

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"to arrive at appropriate delegation of responsibility and authority for meeting some of the goals".

¶10. These national missions will be institutionalized by their respective ministries and will be organized through inter-sectoral groups. Each mission will be tasked to evolve specific objectives spanning the remaining years of the 11th Five-Year Plan and the 12th Five-Year Plan period.

Comprehensive mission documents detailing objectives, strategies, plan of action, timeliness and monitoring evaluation criteria would be developed and submitted to the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change by December 2008. The Council will also periodically review the progress of these missions.

PUSH FOR SOLAR ENERGY

¶11. Out of the eight missions, the emphasis on solar energy is bound to generate the most excitement as the solar power sector has been lagging behind even as the wind power segment of the renewable power portfolio got a boost. "Now the solar sector will, primarily based on private sector investments, create 1000 MW of power generation capacity by the end of the 12th plan period (2017)," said Mr. V. Subramaniam, New and Renewable Energy Sources Secretary. The solar mission will be launched to significantly increase the share of solar power in the total energy mix while recognizing the need for expanding the scope of other renewable and non-fossil options such as nuclear energy, wind energy and biomass.

¶12. Besides the push for solar energy, the Plan also suggests making it mandatory for power grids to purchase renewable energy from producers and sets up progressive targets to do so over the coming years. While the move towards solar and solar derivatives is bound to reduce the dependence on fossil fuels, the plan also puts as much emphasis on demand side management - reducing consumption levels in both industry and housing sectors. The government envisages saving 10,000 MW by 2012 through energy efficiency measures.

COMMENT

¶13. PM Singh concluded the unveiling ceremony of the Plan by recalling Mahatma Gandhi's sagacious message not only to the people of India, but to the world at large: The Earth has enough resources to meet the needs of all people, but will never have enough to serve their greed. This is the spirit which must underlie any strategy for sustainable development. Simultaneously, the Plan gives a clear signal that India will not budge from its position in the international arena that while taking voluntary steps at the

domestic level, it will continue to fight for an equitable global compact that demands greater and mandatory emission cuts from developed countries.

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